



Strengthening the Spirit

Life changes in many ways when you or a loved one develops cancer. You might find yourself turning to your spiritual side more often to help you to cope. Or, you may begin to question your faith. Both of these reactions are normal as you try to reorient your life during a time of crisis. It's important to remember that you're not alone at this time; many people have taken this spiritual journey before you.

Everyone Has a Spiritual Dimension

Whether or not you venture into a church, synagogue, or mosque, you are a spiritual person. Everyone holds certain beliefs and values about what makes life worthwhile, and many people have experienced moments when they have felt connected to a deeper meaning or reality. Spiritual moments can happen at any time; when you feel close to nature, look into the face of a loved one, or enter a house of worship and sense a greater power. Each person's spiritual beliefs and experiences are nurtured in different ways. For some, participation in a religious tradition is important. Others draw spiritual understanding from philosophy or the arts. Whatever your spiritual orientation, remember that it's a dimension of your life that can be developed and strengthened.



Whether you are in the process of strengthening or reevaluating your spiritual beliefs, you might want to try the following:

- ☞ Take time regularly to meditate or pray. This can bring a sense of calm and stability during difficult times.
- ☞ Read spiritual writings such as the Bible, the Koran, the Book of Psalms, Bhagavad Gita, or other faith-based texts. Delving into sacred texts can put you in touch with ancient traditions of wisdom and give you a sense of connection with a more divine reality. Recently published books on spirituality can also give new insights.
- ☞ Seek the help of others. You might begin an ongoing dialogue with your clergy or counselor, or join a group for meditation, prayer and support.
- ☞ Retreat to spiritual spaces, natural settings, or concerts and museums to cultivate a spiritual sense of peace.
- ☞ Keep a journal to express your feelings, thoughts, and memories. It can contribute to your process of self-discovery and spiritual development.

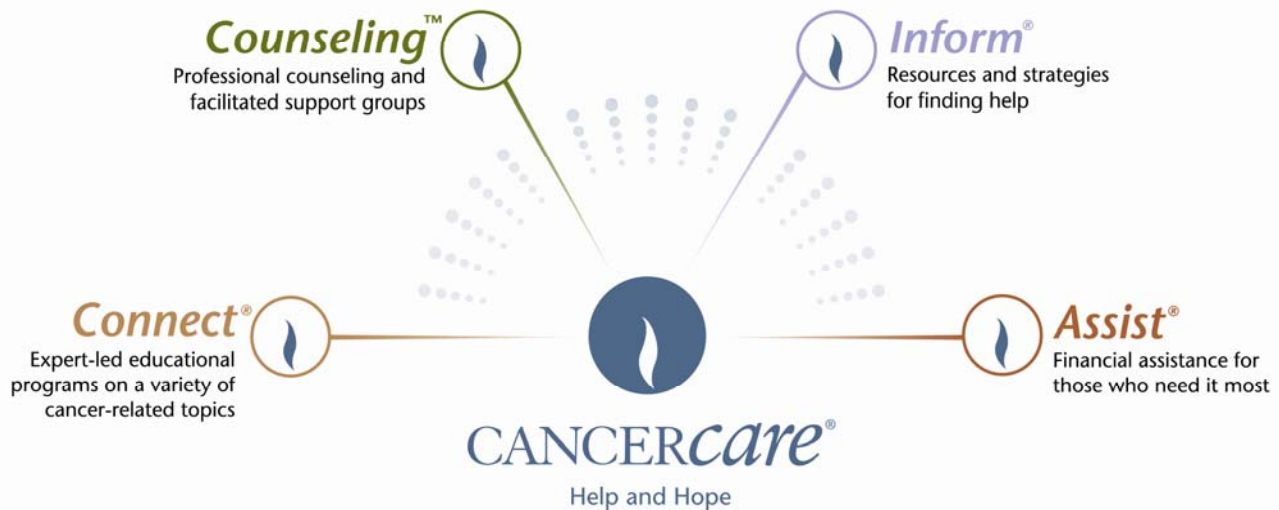


A Strong Sense of Spirituality Can Help

A sense of meaning, purpose, and connection beyond yourself can help you to have a better quality of life during cancer. Some studies show that people with cancer have less anxiety, depression and pain when they feel spiritually connected. Spirituality can also help you to put your problems in perspective. Practices such as prayer, meditation, and worship can help you to calm and restore yourself. Many people also find the support of other members of spiritual communities to be a great source of practical and emotional help.

Above all, remember that you are a spiritual person. A diagnosis of cancer can start a process of looking inward for a stronger connection to what is most meaningful and sacred. Out of the turmoil of this crisis, you can find strength and deeper meaning in your life.

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